575 esses or belong to prestige families. Women members
608 are considered "sisters" of the fraternity, and men "brothers". This establishes an artificial kinship relation which is taken very literally by the more pious. Therefore, a husband and wife never belong to the same
[582] mahabbar. Among the more pious, a member may not marry the widow of a mahabtar "brother", for this would be "levirate" which is expressly prohibited by the church as a prechristian custom.

575 [428] According to traditional law, the mähabbär inherits any property left by a deceased member who leaves no blood kin (consanguinal) , in preferance to any relatives he might have by marriage (affinal). The mahabbar
[426 476] acts as a mutual aid society for its members, as banker, making loans to members in financial need by raising internal subscriptions, and will even pay for the "tazkar" memorial feast 40 days after a member's death if his
[608] family cannot afford to do it properly. Family and personal problems of all kinds are discussed among "brothers" and "sisters", thus crossing the usual kinship
[584] lines of confidence and trust. Marriage arrangements between extended families having eligible youngsters are often first informally broached by women "sisters", who then agree to ask their husbands to act as intermediaries.

575 561 When children reach the "age of reason" (boys above 7 years of age) they may be accepted into a kind of junior mähabtär by older boys; girls above 10 years of age into junior sororities of older girls. When a

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5



## P A R T IV : The Life Cycle of the Individual

561

Like many other societies with a tradition-directed culture, the individual passing through the age-grades of life is taught well in advance what his duties and privileges are at each stage.

The age-grades, though strongly emphasized in Amhara human relationships, are not as detailed nor as sharply divided from each other as in the case of the Galla of Southern Ethiopia (the "gada" age grades).

[854] The two-year breast-feeding period is the happiest of the stages for the baby. Infancy and childhood, for both sexes, are carefree periods of experimentation, which is sharply abrogated as adolescence, a period of authoritarian obedience, approaches. [582] Even the first marriage of an individual, taking place at the very beginning of adulthood (even earlier for girls), permits only a [586 587] minimum of individual choice. Unhappy first marriages are common, and so is divorce. But after this, the fully adult man or woman can assume a freedom of choice not known since childhood. They may seek second mates, change residence, join a different "mähabbär", etc., and the grip of extended family on the individual is somewhat [885] relaxed by the short life-span of the "elder" grade. This in turn permits the middle-aged adult to be regarded and respected as an elder himself, who not only is permitted a maximum of own choice, but who can and does rule the younger grades.

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5



584 door event of the year, the church parades on Epiphany ("Temqat"),
796 in connection with the "guks" tournament of the young men. Dressed up in holiday fashion, the "qonjo" girls eagerly follow the fortunes of their preferred boy friends. When no elders are within hearing, some girls direct teasing shouts of encouragement at the young men, even occasionally "ellel" (reserved for church ritual earlier that day). This day is the climax of the informal courtship - serious flirting season, in mid-January.

The third and final occasion occurs on Easter, "Fassika", at the very end of the dry season, just before social activities move indoors. For this holy day, the girls have once more washed their
302 garments despite the shortage of water, reddened their palms, prepared the hairdo. Everyone is in a happy mood, for the long lenten season is over, and meat is consumed in greater quantities than at any other time. There is an element of urgency in social relations, for this is the second and final marriage season, and soon all social life and kin visiting comes to an end for four long, dreary, rainy, chilly months.

It is on the basis of such informal courtship, climaxed on these three annual occasions but continuing in-between, that a young man requests his father to initiate negotiations for marriage by sending an intermediary to the girl's family. If the match seems suitable to the elders, negotiations begin.

4. Adulthood and Marriage: Dominance of the Kin.

582 A girl's first marriage nearly always takes place before she is fully adult, physically as well as in maturity of character; while the bridegroom, though also young, is physically adult and in

582 his late 'teens. The difference in what is considered "suitable age" is thus five or more years, for the girl may be as young as 13 or 14 in the still prevailing (though officially now outlawed) tradition. The reason is not only the earlier maturing of the girl, but partly the emphasis of protecting her virginity until marriage, partly the attitude that the groom must "tame" his bride - and the younger the better.

597 608 Consanguinal ties continue stronger, after marriage, than conjugal ties. The "artificial kinship" created at this period of the life cycle is that of the bride's "best man" ("mizē") who is sworn to protect her even against her husband, and who is in a good position to do so as a residential kinsman of the husband. This emphasis on consanguinal ties even after marriage is similar to other parts of the Middle East (footnote 80), and also Africa.

885 A fully adult man ("säw") and woman ("sȳet") are honorifically addressed, e.g. in church usage, as "acmä adam" for man (from Geez "Adam"), "acmä hawan" for woman (from Geez for "Eve"), and the connotation is that they have passed the hot-blooded "gobäz" and "qonjo" stage and have become reasonable, calm, responsible persons who know the etiquette of their culture and have become fully cognizant of proper behavior at all forseeable events in the life cycle.

583 585 A. Marriage Patterns

There are three predominant types of marriage:

Footnote 80: Patqi, Raphael: Relationship Patterns among the Arabs. Middle Eastern Affairs, Vol. 2, May 1951, pp. 180-5

583 184 pecting this, screams loudly, making the "capture" official. After some days or weeks, the husband officially informs the bride's parents that he has consummated the marriage and intends to keep the bride as his wife; whereupon the bride's kin can pretend to "give in" and make the best out of the "damage done" without much loss of face, by agreeing to an official "semanya", without a big feast or cows, or "boasting" the "fukkara". But otherwise the legal procedure is that of "semanya", with the cheqa shum present.

[589] A spinster is so rare that she seems non-existant, unless sick and handicapped so that she cannot function as a wife. Therefore, a spinster would be mocked and suspected of hidden ailments. To prevent this, a poor or unpopular girl might ask her kin or spokesman to seek a poor man and ask him "to abduct" her.

582 656 The new, modern laws have made little attempt to change these traditional forms of marriage, beyond trying to acknowledge and "normalize" them. The new minimum age of marriage is legal at 15 for girls, 18 for boys, but this is generally ignored and evaded in [584] the rural areas where girls still marry at 13 and 14. Through indirect means, the Emperor Haile Selassie has also urged that boys and girls should see more of each other before marriage, have a longer and formal courtship.

178 871 581 Very recently, two differing attitudes have developed among young men educated in the modern school system, toward marriage with educated girls. In the provincial towns, the (semi-educated) young men, who have finished elementary school or 7 grades, say that girls who have finished as little as 4 or 5 grades of elementary school consider themselves "educated", are proud, and tell their

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5



*883 857 868 Somewhat later, when he reaches ten or eleven, the Amhara boy begins to accustom himself to the plow, perhaps trying his hand at it from time to time while his father rests for lunch. Intermittently his ability increases, and by the age of fourteen or so—earlier if the family is short of help—he is given a regular share of the plowing. This may be limited to one or two hours a day at first, but before many seasons elapse he is ready to undertake a full day's work, along with his older relatives.

*883 868 [434] In his mid-teens the Amhara boy is normally given a small part of his father's land to use for himself. The boy has full charge of plowing and harvesting this land and selling the crops at market. The crops or money he earns thereby is referred to as *gulammā* ("private possession") and is set aside for helping him to get started on his own later on. Eventually the *gulammā* will be used to purchase new clothes, an ox, and presents for his bride. Year by year the father may add a bit more land for the boy's private management, though all together it does not often amount to a very large quantity; he may produce, say, 150 to 200 liters of grain for his *gulammā* in a year (in the Amhara system of measures, about 2 *dāwlā*). When he has saved enough [582] grain to fill a *riq*, a large wicker storage bin plastered inside with cow dung, he is considered ready to get married and strike out on his own.

By the time a boy begins to accumulate his *gulammā* he has learned nearly everything he needs to know for performing the work which will be expected of him as an adult. In his late teens the education is completed, through the mastery of such special techniques as fashioning the yoke and wooden attachments for the plow, and constructing the walls and roof for a house.

The work life of the Amhara peasant is thus a simple continuation of activities with which he has long been familiar. The same is true, *mutatis* [463] *mutandis*, for those who, following their fathers' footsteps, become priests or sorcerers, governors or warriors, artisans or traders. In these cases, moreover, the foregoing pattern applies to a great extent, since the latter roles are often combined with an agricultural economic base and way of life. (Special aspects of some of these variant patterns will be discussed below.)

857 868 This pattern of gradually increased work responsibility is conspicuous in the case of girls. While shepherding and other childhood tasks are shared by both sexes, the Amhara girl begins to do distinctively female work at about six or seven. First she learns to clear seeds from cotton, and to spin, by hand. Later on she is introduced to the more taxing female chores, like fetching water and grinding grain. The progressive increase of the girl's work load is visibly illustrated by the graduated sizes of clay jugs used for carrying [415] water. When she begins to fetch water, the young girl carries a tiny jug, called a *gambo*. As she becomes older and stronger she is given a larger size, a small *enserā*. Finally, the mature female carries the large *enserā*, a jug that holds as much as twenty liters.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5



At around ten years the Amhara girl leaves the shepherd's work once and for all and spends all her time about the house. She becomes increasingly useful with kitchen work—chopping onions, grinding pepper, baking *ĭnjarā*. Bit by bit she learns all the arts of the housewife, including how to make good *doro wat*, a hot chicken stew, the dish that really proves the mettle of an Amhara bride. By the age of twelve or thirteen she knows enough to manage a home by herself and is ripe for marriage, though her training is often capped by a period after marriage during which she works alongside her mother-in-law in the home of her husband's parents. Thus the Amhara social system sees to it that the adolescent girl, as well as the adolescent boy, is familiar with adult work responsibilities and prepared to shoulder them without much ado.

*Toward Marital Roles*

The transition to adult status in Amhara culture is related above all to the assumption of marital roles. The three events which more than anything else establish one as an adult are marriage, moving into one's own house, and begetting a child.

Preparation for the roles of spouse and parent is more or less continuous throughout childhood, so that nearly all Amhara enter marriage as a matter of course and at an early age. Strong identifications are formed through virtually constant association with the parent of the same sex during adolescence, and to a large extent throughout childhood. When they are not out tending the herds, girls are working around the house in the company of their mothers, and boys are off in the fields or going on trips with their fathers. This identification is strengthened by experimental play within children's groups as well. It has been observed that tiny boys and girls play "marriage" and "house" with considerable sophistication, even to the point of pretending to send a messenger to the bride's parents to announce that she had been proven a virgin.[5]

With regard to premarital preparation for adult sexual functions, however, a double standard does exist. Although public norms require boys to be virgin at marriage, and one hears it said that "in the old days" this norm was strictly enforced, premarital sexual experimentation for boys is regarded as a natural occurrence.* In practice, and according to the norms of the male adolescents themselves, boys are expected to have sexual experience before marriage so long as it is carried out quietly and with discretion. If a boy is still virgin by the end of his teens he may be referred to by one of his

* Indeed, one of the normal functions of maidservants in the well-to-do families has been to provide sexual initiation for adolescent boys.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5



836 183 peers with the insulting term *sīlb* ("castrated one"). Indeed, the word that comes closest to signifying male adolescent in Amharic, *goramsā*, has the primary connotation of one who goes around with women.

836 572 [837] The conditions attending premarital sexual experience for youths explain in part the nature of adolescent male peer relations. A *goramsā* needs at least one fairly close friend, not only as a confidant for his "secrets," but also to aid him in his affairs. When one *goramsā* goes to the home of a married woman—the strict controls against premarital affairs for girls limit his choice to married women or divorcees—the other stands guard to see that the husband or anyone else does not intrude. When he finds himself in rivalry with a competitor for the same woman, the friend assists him if the fighting gets difficult. On the other hand, the existence of a limited number of accessible females in any area implies that no alliance of friends can become very large; the competition is too great. The conflicts of interest among *goramsā* often provoke feuding and sometimes serious *dulā* fights.

836 [585] The unwed girl, by contrast, must remain a virgin at all costs. It is important to the groom, not only because of the religious and social sentiments involved, but also because the Amhara male cherishes the sense of "conquering" his woman. A girl who is found not to be a virgin on her wedding night will be beaten by her husband and possibly returned to her parents. Her parents will be scandalized, and, if she is sent back, will probably give her a beating.

882 In order to protect the girl's virginity, she is kept under close watch by her parents after the age of ten or eleven. They do not allow her to go outside the home area by herself or to associate with boys who are not her relatives. She attends festive celebrations in the company of her parents. In some families she is kept from doing excessively heavy work in order to prevent the accidental rupture of her hymen.

881 582 The onset of menstruation is kept secret, since menstruation is seen as a shameful event for the unmarried woman. But as the girl approaches the age of puberty her mother will be advised by other female relatives that it is time to be on the lookout for a husband. Twelve or thirteen is the customary marrying age for girls, as compared with the late teens or early twenties for boys; and it has not been uncommon for girls to marry still younger, especially in former times.

*883 [832] [584] This strict surveillance of the daughter does not wholly prevent a mild sort of flirting which occurs at the marketplace or on public holidays. On the latter occasions, especially Masqāl and Ṭimqat, the girl may make some effort to appear attractive. She may wear her best clothes, dress up her hair, and, if she can afford it, put on a bit of perfume. These occasions provide a chance for the unmarried boy to spot an interesting mate, in which case he

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5



may ask around to learn the identity of her father and then present the matter hopefully to his own father.

Despite this possibility of concession to the boy's amorous desires, the interests of the father are decisive in the selection of a marriage mate, and traditionally the boy has not even known what his bride looks like until the wedding itself. The boy who dares to choose a wife on his own commits an offense for which the father has the moral right to curse and disinherit him. Marriage is regarded as a bond between families, not individuals, and the families of prospective brides are carefully inspected before the father agrees to a contract of betrothal. In making his choice, the father looks for a family whose economic level is at least as high as, if not slightly higher, than his own. He makes certain that the family does not have members who are leprous or who practice the manual crafts associated with the evil eye. He sends a messenger to visit the family on some pretext, for the purpose of determining the character of the girl and her parents. If there is any consanguine relation between the two families, he makes sure that the prospective bride and groom are separated by more than seven generations; that is, they must not have a common great-great-grandparent. A further consideration might be whether there has been any strife or rivalry between the two families, in which case the father may want to try to resolve it by means of a "political" marriage.

Once the father has decided upon a suitable mate for his son, with the advice of the mother and perhaps other relatives, he sends one or more intermediaries, usually elders, to speak on his behalf with the girl's father. The interview is conducted with considerable circumlocution, the petitioners veiling their true purpose until late in the conversation and the girl's father displaying reluctance to grant their request. Often no agreement is reached at this meeting, and the petitioning party must wait to ask a second time. If the girl's father is unwilling to give her hand, he will beg off with some polite excuse, such as that the girl is too young or that he has already promised her to someone else. If he is willing, a date for a formal betrothal is set, at which time the boy and his father together with a group of elders and other relatives repair to the home of the girl's father. After the boy gives presents to the girl's parents, the two fathers discuss their respective contributions of land, cattle, and other goods to the prospective household. When these economic arrangements are settled, a contract for marriage is sworn before witnesses and a date for the wedding is agreed upon, leaving ample time for the two families to vie in preparing sumptuous feasts for the occasion. If the girl is quite young, as long as two or three years may elapse between engagement and marriage.

The wedding festivities commence at the home of the girl's father. After

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5



graduates in the late fifties, but the government's implementation of a program of public health centers has opened up increasing opportunities for their employment. Graduates of the school of social work have been placed in positions with little difficulty.

On the other hand, in those areas in which the government has shown little or no interest the school authorities have been hard put to find employment for their graduates. This was shown most dramatically in the case of the now defunct community development training project at Majete, whose graduates were allowed to drift into oblivion due to the absence of an effective community development program in the country. Those who have completed courses of study in agriculture have not been extensively employed by the government because of chronic disorganization and neglect in the Ministry of Agriculture, while lack of capital and know-how has tended to keep them from private agricultural enterprise. Graduates of the technical and engineering schools have been having some difficulty in entering the work force due to the slow pace of Ethiopia's industrial development. Graduates of general academic programs, finally, and those who drop out before completing some course of study, tend to be left to their own devices.

While the modernizing sector, then, has introduced the revolutionary notion of vocation and has institutionalized means of training young Ethiopians for modern work roles, it has not yet provided adequate mechanisms either for guiding them into and through the training programs or for employing them properly once they are trained.

*Preparation for Marriage*

Conditions of growing up in the modernizing sector have disrupted the harmonious pattern of Amhara adolescence also with respect to entrance into adult family roles. Conflicts arise both from postponement of the normal age for marriage and from radically new ideas about the nature of marriage.

The modern adolescent typically expects to marry at an age that is at least eight to ten years older than his traditional counterpart. While Amhara girls have traditionally married in their early teens, girls in the senior class of secondary school now say they expect to marry in their early twenties. Amhara boys have traditionally married around the age of twenty, but those in post-elementary schools now expect to marry in their late twenties or early thirties.

This shift is due to a desire to attain as much education as possible, and above all, for the boys, to the precarious economic position of modern adolescents. While living on his father's farm an Amhara boy could marry early with the assurance of having enough land to work to support his family at least at subsistence level. The modern boy who finishes secondary school or

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5



college, however, has no assets beyond his diploma in most cases. He must wait a number of years to achieve the beginnings of financial stability.

The students' conception of marriage, moreover, reflects a still more profound change. They are no longer content to regard the selection of a mate as a matter to be arranged by parents in accord with their own interests and standards. They reject the old-fashioned Amhara marriage in which romantic love plays no part and divorce is common. Most of them insist on the right to choose their own spouses, and they tend to approach that choice with criteria

TABLE 6

QUALITIES MOST DESIRED BY STUDENTS IN A FUTURE WIFE OR HUSBAND*

| Quality | Per Cent Checking Quality as Either First or Second Choice | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Secondary Schools | | College Males |
| | Males | Females | |
| Educated | 48 | 75 | 41 |
| Shares my opinions and beliefs | 44 | 48 | 43 |
| Religious | 34 | 25 | 19 |
| Good companion | 25 | 30 | 45 |
| Beautiful | 15 | 0 | 22 |
| Kind and generous | 15 | 13 | 9 |
| Wealthy | 4 | 2 | 5 |
| Will impress my friends socially | 3 | 2 | 2 |
| Number | (385) | (39) | (191) |

* Related to Gillespie-Allport question No. 17.

which differ from those of their parents. Instead of following such traditional criteria as good upbringing, family background, and wealth, a number of modern adolescents aspire to find spouses who, above all else, are educated, who share their opinions and beliefs, and who will be good companions. (See Table 6.) Even such strong aversions as those against tribal and religious exogamy have receded somewhat before the new ideal of marriage founded on romantic love.* The figures in Table 7 are indicative of the diffusion of this ideal as well as of the growth of a sentiment of Ethiopian nationality.

* Although Amhara men have customarily had sexual relations with non-Amhara women and produce countless offspring from them, the latter have not been considered appropriate choices for marriage, except in very high strata where the marriage served a purpose primarily political.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5



These changes in the definition of marriage have produced tremendous tensions and heartache in the relations between generations. Deprived of authority in the occupational sphere, parents of modern adolescents cling with all the more pride to their traditional rights and obligations in the sphere of getting their children properly married. They often nag their children to leave school and get married while young. They stand determined to select their children's mates. If they do admit some consideration for their children's desires on the matter, they insist that any prospective spouse measure up to traditional criteria. As a result, disagreements between students and their parents revolve around the subject of marriage more frequently than anything else.

TABLE 7

DISPOSITION OF STUDENTS TOWARD TRIBAL AND RELIGIOUS EXOGAMY

| | | Secondary School | | College Males (per cent) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Males (per cent) | Females (per cent) | |
| Willingness to marry a person of a different religion | Yes | 29 | 33 | 60 |
| | No | 71 | 67 | 40 |
| Willingness to marry a person of a different tribe | Yes | 64 | 73 | 84 |
| | No | 36 | 27 | 16 |
| Number | | (392) | (40) | (194) |

Modern adolescents, however, have by no means wholly rejected traditional attitudes and sentiments concerning marriage and courtship. Although a number of students say they want to marry for the modern reason of finding personal happiness through a satisfying love relation, many more indicate that they are chiefly inspired by the traditional motives of wanting to beget children. Most of them wish to continue the custom of having large families, the most frequently mentioned numbers of children desired being "four" and "more than six."*

The modern boys still widely share the traditional expectation that their

* The mean number of children desired by the college students in my sample is 4.23. This figure exceeds those of all the national college groups reported by Gillespie and Allport except Egypt and South African Bantu.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5



furniture, etc.—are equally burdensome investments if the returnee does not possess them. Furthermore, the traditional large wedding is still expected in most cases. In the city this involves an enormous expense—as much as Eth$2,000–$4,000—which often puts the groom in debt for several years.*

There are many returnees for whom these factors are excuses more than insuperable obstacles, or who frankly prefer the extended bachelordom made possible by the greater freedom of the modernizing sector to an uncertain match. If, as frequently is the case, they would marry only an educated wife, they may be discouraged by the shortage of educated Ethiopian women; or beset by too much pride, if coming from a humble background, to ask for the hand of an educated girl who is likely to come from an upper-class family. They may be victims of the cycle of antagonism that has developed between educated men and women in Ethiopia, the former attacking the latter for demanding too much in the way of material things and being only superficially modernized—"half-baked"—and the latter indicting the former for preferring foreign girls and unjustly neglecting Ethiopian women.

But the root of the problem is often deeper (leaving aside, for this discussion, characterological factors). It is entwined with a basic insecurity about the whole idea of marriage in the transitional atmosphere of contemporary Ethiopia. Perhaps nowhere in the minds of the returnees do traditional and modern norms stand in such delicate counterpoise as with regard to the question of the sort of wife one should marry and the proper type of relation to have with her. Should he prefer the traditional woman, modestly dressed and inconspicuous, or the Western ideal of a sexually attractive female? Should he have a wife who stays at home all the time, or one whom he takes along to social gatherings? Should he have a wife with whom to share interests and discuss problems, or one to order about and keep in her place? The returnees have normally been attracted by the Western marriage pattern while abroad, but it is so out of place in the Ethiopian context that many are troubled by the prospect on return. The foreign-educated man feels he should have an educated wife, but he also feels threatened by a woman who is independent, especially if she is holding a job. Such ambivalence adds an additional dimension of vulnerability to the returnee's position.

In sum: the conditions of life receptive to a modernizing intellectual stratum have not yet been established in Ethiopia. The personal frustrations of the returnees are an inevitable consequence of their being the bearers of modern culture in a traditional oligarchical order—especially one that has

* A new custom has developed in response to this problem. It has become the practice in some offices for sheets of paper to be circulated prior to a wedding in the ministry or agency where the groom is employed. Co-workers write the amount they wish to be deducted from their salaries in their behalf. Most recently, modest weddings have started to become respectable.

634
635 Parish and Hamlet. The highland zones can be di-
*[192] vided along three complementary social dimensions---po-
litical, ecclesiastical, and economic. Politically, the
province is divided into awraja (sub-province), warada
(district of a sub-province), and meketel warada (sub-
632 district). The meketel warada consists of fifteen to
361 thirty parishes (deber). The parish, in turn, is com-
*[192] posed of three to ten hamlets (mender), each consisting
592 of ten to fifty households (bet). Most households con-
sist of husband, wife, unmarried sons, and pre-pubscent
daughters[11]; a minority of households consist of aged
spouses only, or of widowed individuals living by them-
592 selves. Characteristically, the households of a hamlet
361 are dispersed, so that any one is perhaps 100 to 300
meters from its closest neighbors.

647 While officials of the provincial and sub-provin-
cial governments are generally out-landers appointed by
the central government, administrators of the warada
and meketel warada are usually members of the local gen-
*[192] try. Within the parish, civil administration is in the
hands of the ceka sum, a petty administrator who imple-

• [582] [11]Since it is common for a girl to marry at 11 or
[591] 12, but to delay the virilocal move until age 15 or 16,
the natal household may include a married daughter.

ments decisions that come down from the mekətel warada or warada.[12] Incumbency tends to rotate among the senior ristеñas of the parish. Amhara trace genealogies ambilineally to the original recipients of primary land rights (rist) to local fields. Ambilineages are traced from these apical ancestory through those descendants (ristеñas) who have made effective claims to the fields of the original estates. Over time, it is the genealogical links associated with land claims which tend to be remembered, to the exclusion of other descent ties. Similarly, it is these links which are examined most carefully in deciding whether a proposed marriage would be properly exogamous (i.e., ideally excluding descendants of the sixth ascending generation).[13]

From the perspective of the Amhara peasant, the ecclesiastical organization of Begemder consists of two levels, the bishopric (located in Gondar, the provincial

[12] A fereseña, rural policeman, is also a resident farmer of the parish.

[13] Hoben (1963:116-117) considers these matters in detail, and notes that occasionally the boundaries of exogamous unions are contracted to include the descendants of the fifth and even fourth ascending generations.

734 [735] [823] [778] his hamlet to become a mendicant, begging from alms-givers at the gates of large and famous churches. Even the sickman whose economic circumstances enable him to remain at home may depart, to seek an efficacious tebel spring, once locally available therapies prove ineffective.

*753 734 Among the ailments of this category, leprosy is considered particularly loathsome. In the abstract, it is associated with a hereditary vector; in practice, the leper's neighbors fear contact with him, and the sickman who remains at home is physically segregated in a hut of his own, away from other residents of the hamlet. Because marriages are difficult to arrange for the primary relatives of lepers, the son of a leper frequently chooses to move away from the paternal hamlet to some place where his family's affliction is unknown.

*753 The absence of more profound moral consequences for either category of ailment can be explained, first, by the fact that associations existing between the sickman and sanction-wielding supernaturals are unaffected by either illness or cure, since these maladies are linked to non-purposive pathogenic agencies, such as gerifta and likift. Further, effective cures are either secular, and thus require the therapeutic assistance of no sanction-wielding supernaturals, or, in the case of tebel therapies, rely on only the socially sanctioned supernaturals of the Church.